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SUBJECT: MFA HIGHLIGHTS NATO PUBLIC EDUCATION PLAN AT JOINT WORKING SESSION

REF: A. ZAGREB 173

[¶](#)B. 06 ZAGREB 1462

SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Ambassador Bradtke co-chaired a joint session of Post's NATO working group and the GoC's inter-ministerial NATO Coordination Committee with FM Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic on January 16. Davor Bozinovic, Croatian Ambassador to NATO and head of public outreach for the National Committee for NATO, briefed the group in detail on the GoC plan for building public support for Alliance membership. Bozinovic, former chief of staff to President Stjepan Mesic, recently launched a pro-NATO offensive both in the media and among political parties, taking advantage of his broad contacts across the political spectrum. The Ambassador and FM identified a number of ways to jointly support his efforts and expand the number of voices speaking in favor of NATO. While much work remains to be done, the meeting highlighted Croatia's serious efforts to assess public attitudes and begin concrete implementation of a long-awaited plan to increase support for NATO membership.

END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

SUPPORT CREEPING UP AFTER RIGA

[¶](#)2. Bozinovic pointed to post-Riga polling commissioned by the GoC indicating a relative majority of Croatians now support NATO membership, with 39 percent in favor and 37 percent against. The same poll, FM Grabar-Kitarovic stressed, showed that 84 percent see Croatia in NATO in the future, meaning the vast majority accept the GoC's pursuit of Alliance membership.

[¶](#)3. Bozinovic divided the Croatian public into five categories: expressly opposed to NATO, mildly opposed, uninformed opposed, realistic advocates and idealistic advocates. Bozinovic will focus outreach efforts on the last four groups, which, unlike the strongest opponents, should be open to learning more about NATO.

[¶](#)4. Key messages of the campaign are that NATO membership will:

- enhance national security,
- provide a guarantee against future aggression, and
- modernize Croatia's Armed Forces.

TARGET GROUPS: VETERANS, WOMEN, AND PENSIONERS

[¶](#)5. Bozinovic identified three key target groups: veterans of Croatia's "Homeland War," who tend to be the strongest supporters of NATO, and women and pensioners, who make up the majority of those undecided and mildly opposed. In a three-phased campaign, Bozinovic plans to convert war vets from passive to active supporters of NATO, hoping for a

multiplier effect, and educate women and retirees on NATO's security benefits, highlighting how membership will help bring an end to military conscription.

¶ 16. Bozanic has already started meeting with political parties, journalists, and veterans' NGOs, and plans to shift the focus to women and pensioners during the summer. In the fall, when parliamentary elections are expected, the GoC will consolidate its results and stress political consensus, working to keep NATO from becoming an electoral issue. Bozanic's goal is to achieve a solid relative majority of support within the Croatian public for NATO membership by the end of 2007.

JOINT INITIATIVES

¶ 17. The Ambassador and Minister agreed to coordinate our key public talking points on NATO and to develop and maintain a joint calendar of upcoming opportunities for public outreach. Post will also work with the MFA to pursue development of an educational publication on NATO for high school students, which would likely also reach many women and pensioners in Croatia's extended-family households.

¶ 18. The Ambassador also encouraged and agreed to actively support the MFA's efforts to use high-level visitors from other NATO allies (i.e. the Polish FM who will visit Zagreb on February 22) to spread pro-Alliance messages to the Croatian public.

BRADTKE